

SELLING TRUE VALUE IN TODAY'S GARAGE DOORS

Why helping clients with garage door design matters today more than ever

By Scott O'Neill

In 1986, when garage door options were either wood or steel sectional doors, advising customers was quite simple. Here in California at that time, anything was likely perceived as better than the common flip-up doors.

Cost isn't the only factor

Back then, we basically needed to know how to quote customers a price and tell them how 24-gauge steel is better than 26 gauge. But today, 30 years later, it's different. We now have almost countless garage door solutions for our clients. Instead of being order-takers, we now need to be design consultants to help them find the right door design that enhances their home.

Fortunately, the economy and the media are helping us. Our current economy is generally healthier; real estate values are bouncing back, and consumers are spending more.

On weekend cable TV, viewers can find dozens of shows on home improvement. Homeowners are more aware than ever about the impact of home enhancements and how they can add real resale value to the home. And our manufacturers have greatly widened their garage door offerings for much more customized looks.

Design matters

With all these choices, garage door salespeople need a bit of savvy and sage advice to help guide clients in their garage door purchases. Today, the right garage door must consider the home's architectural aspects, the client's tastes, and a whole lot of product understanding. To ensure a highly satisfied customer, we can't let them buy the "wrong" door that prematurely wears out or doesn't blend well with the design of their home.

"So what's right for *my* house?"

A good example of such a design challenge was my experience with Mr. Morgan, a customer of mine in Orinda, Calif. When he contacted me, he expressed interest in "something modern" to complement his home.

"My coworker recommended a really simplistic looking garage door like I had before," he said.

"Yes, you can definitely choose doors like that," I replied. "They are easy to maintain and cost-efficient, since they would consist of steel garage doors with insulation and made in a flush pattern."

Shifting the discussion to design

Then I mentioned that we have garage doors with more design impact than that, and I asked him if he could send me an image of his house, which he did. Once I started that process, design became his primary focus. To satisfy his initial idea, I sent him an image of his garage with new flush doors. But he responded that he wasn't "getting any improved look to my house." I agreed.

"Have you heard of all-glass/extruded aluminum garage doors?" I asked. He had, but only briefly. So I created a mock-up image of the glass garage doors and made the aluminum frame pop by coloring it the same as the trim around his house windows and front door.

Upon reviewing the mock-up image, his next question simply was, "How much are these, and how soon can I get them installed?"

I provided him a preliminary quote that was a lot more than conventional garage doors would have been. But he didn't flinch. He just wanted to know how soon I could get going.

Better than expected

The outcome was even better than I could have expected. After the installation, I called him to follow up, and he told me, "You know, Scott, we have tons of friends on social media. We adopted a wonderful little girl, and our holiday photo on Facebook got 14 likes last December. But the before-after image of your garage door got 143 likes."

"We couldn't be more pleased with this purchase decision," he continued. "One friend literally stated, 'From this one improvement, your house looks like it just improved by \$500,000!'"

I'd say we have a very satisfied client! ■

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